

**Board of Veterans Services
Meeting Minutes
October 8, 2008**

A meeting of the Board of Veterans Services (BVS) was held on Wednesday, October 8, 2008 at the Sitter & Barfoot Veterans Care Center in Richmond.

Members Present

- Dan Boyer
- Vince Burgess
- Paris Davis
- John Edwards
- Paul Galanti
- Pat Green
- Thad Jones
- Toddy Puller
- Peyton Robertson
- Max Taylor
- Frank Wickersham

Members Absent

- John Anderson
- Mark Cole
- Kirk Cox
- Samuel Metters
- Al Sample
- Bettye Simmons
- Judson Stanley
- Vivian Watts

Commonwealth of Virginia Officials Present

- Kate Morosoff, Legislative Assistant to Senator Toddy Puller
- Erin Bryant, Assistant Secretary of Public Safety
- Flora Hezel, Assistant Attorney General, Office of the Attorney General
- Anne Atkins, Director of Communications, Department of Veterans Services (DVS)
- Bert Boyd, Chief Operating Officer, DVS
- Steven Combs, Director of Policy and Planning, DVS
- Rhonda Earman, Special Assistant to the Commissioner, DVS
- Dan Kemano, Cemeteries Director, DVS
- Armistead Ransone, Director of Finance and Administration, DVS
- Judith Reid, IT Program Assistant, DVS
- Cathy Wilson, Executive Director, Virginia Wounded Warrior Program, DVS

Materials Distributed

- Meeting agenda
- Draft minutes of the July 30, 2008 meeting
- DVS Commissioner's Report
- Benefits Committee Report
- Care Centers Committee Report
- DVS Point Paper on the Missing in America Project
- DVS Point Paper on Burial Vaults at Virginia's state veterans cemeteries
- Joint Leadership Council of Veterans Service Organizations 2009 Legislative Objectives and Position Papers
- Veterans Services Foundation Chairman's Report
- Virginia Wounded Warrior Program Fundraising Brochure

Call to Order

The membership and guests recited the pledge of allegiance to the American flag.

Roll Call and Quorum Determination

With 9 of 19 (17 voting) members present, a quorum was determined and Chairman Galanti called the meeting to order at 11:05 a.m. Paris Davis and Max Taylor arrived shortly after the meeting began.

Approval of Minutes

Commissioner Burgess made a motion that the following two errors in the minutes of the July 30, 2008 meeting be corrected:

- Page 1, 1st paragraph: delete "American Legion Department of Virginia" and replace with "Sitter & Barfoot Veterans Care Center"
- Page 2, 3rd full paragraph: delete "billion" and replace with "million."

A motion was made, seconded, and passed unanimously to approve the minutes with these two changes.

Department of Veterans Services Report

Commissioner Burgess introduced Cathy Wilson, Executive Director of the Virginia Wounded Warrior Program (VWWP). Ms. Wilson covered these topics:

- Recent hiring of an Executive Assistant
- Planned hiring of three Regional Directors
- Initial focus of the VWWP will be on Post Traumatic Stress Disorder (PTSD) and Traumatic Brain Injury (TBI) but the program will look at additional services that should be provided to Virginia veterans
- The "Painting a Moving Train" training event planned for November 6 and 7
- Planned distribution of at least \$1 million in the form of community grants

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Commissioner Burgess delivered his report on the activities of the Department of Veterans Services. That report is included as Attachment 1 to these minutes.

The Commissioner focused on the budget cuts faced by all state agencies, including the Department of Veterans Services. He emphasized that the cuts would only affect the General Fund portion of the DVS budget (approximately \$8 million of an approximate \$40 million budget), and come on top of budget cuts of 5% and 2% that the agency has already made. He stressed that the Department would try to avoid any cuts in direct services to veterans.

Pre-Registered Public Comment

There was no pre-registered public comment.

Standing Committee Reports

Benefits Committee

In Mr. Sample's absence, Mr. Taylor delivered the report of the Benefits Committee. That report is included as Attachment 2 to these minutes. A motion was made, seconded, and passed unanimously to accept the report.

Care Centers Committee

Mr. Jones delivered the report of the Care Centers Committee. That report is included as Attachment 3 to these minutes.

Cemeteries Committee

Mr. Green delivered the report of the Cemetery Committee. He briefly covered these topics:

- The Cemetery Committee meeting, held immediately prior to the BVS meeting
- The Deed Transfer Ceremony for the Virginia Veterans Cemetery, Dublin, held on September 22, 2008. Mr. Green noted that most of the costs for this ceremony were met by the Town of Dublin
- The transfer of unclaimed veterans' cremains from funeral homes in Virginia to Virginia's veterans cemeteries, where the veteran will receive a dignified final resting place
- Equipment replacement needs at the Virginia Veterans Cemetery, Amelia and the Albert G. Horton, Jr. Memorial Veterans Cemetery. Mr. Green asked Steven Combs to provide additional details. Mr. Combs provided this information:
 - Mr. Green asked DVS Cemetery Director Dan Kemano and his staff to prepare detailed equipment replacement plans for each cemetery
 - Funding is needed to replace equipment that has reached or passed the end of its useful operational life
 - The cemeteries are not currently funded for these equipment replacement costs
 - The Virginia Veterans Cemetery, Amelia has equipment replacement needs totaling approximately: \$146,000 in FY10, \$25,000 in FY11, and \$63,000 in FY12
 - The Albert G. Horton, Jr. Memorial Veterans Cemetery has equipment replacement needs totaling approximately: \$29,000 in FY10, \$43,000 in FY11, and \$21,000 in FY12

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- The Virginia Veterans Cemetery, Amelia does not have a backup backhoe. If the cemetery's backhoe breaks, burial operations will come to a halt
- Mr. Green said he has asked DVS to prioritize equipment replacement needs so that if only limited funding is available, the most essential equipment can be purchased

Budget and Strategic Planning Committee

Budget and Strategic Planning Committee Chairman Samuel Metters was not present. In his absence, Mr. Combs stated that Dr. Metters requests that the Chairs of the other BVS Committees complete their review of the DVS Strategic Plan and Service Area Plans

Chairman Galanti asked Mr. Combs to briefly cover the two point papers the Board had asked the Department to prepare:

- DVS Point Paper on the Missing in America Project. This point paper is included as Attachment 4 to these minutes
- DVS Point Paper on Burial Vaults at Virginia State Veterans Cemeteries. This point paper is included as Attachment 5 to these minutes

Commissioner Burgess followed up on the question asked earlier by Mr. Davis, and reported that 18 of 231 employees at the Virginia Veterans Care Center were veterans, and that 12 of 184 employees at the Sitter & Barfoot Veterans Care Center were veterans.

Discussion ensued on the importance, in medical or psychological care for veterans, of having care providers who are veterans and who can directly relate to the conditions that veterans experienced during their military service and afterwards.

Legislative Report

Senator Edwards reported on the success veteran-related legislation has received in the General Assembly in recent years. He highlighted these recent issues:

- The shift of the Department of Veterans Services from the Administration Secretariat to the Public Safety Secretariat
- The creation of the Virginia Wounded Warrior Program
- The increase in the number of disability claims filed by DVS on behalf of Virginia's veterans
- The opening of the Albert G. Horton, Jr. Memorial Veterans Cemetery and the planned opening of the Virginia Veterans Cemetery, Dublin
- The transfer of support for the Virginia War Memorial from the Department of General Services to the Department of Veterans Services
- The work of the Virginia War Memorial and the Virginia War Memorial Education Foundation to record the oral histories of Virginia's veterans
- Additional funding for the Virginia Military Survivors and Dependents Education Program
- The creation of a program for Service-Disabled, Veteran-Owned, Small Businesses

JLC Chairman's Report

Mr. Boyer stated that the Joint Leadership Council of Veterans Service Organizations is made up of representatives of 23 member organizations, which have over 250,000 members. Mr. Boyer

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reviewed the JLC 2009 Legislative Objectives. A summary of those objectives and the supporting position papers are included as Attachment 6 to these minutes.

A motion was made, seconded, and approved unanimously to support the JLC 2009 Legislative Objectives.

Chairman Galanti took a moment to formally welcome new Board member Peyton Robertson.

Veterans Services Foundation Report

Mr. Wickersham delivered the report of the Veterans Services Foundation. That report is included as Attachment 7 to these minutes.

Mr. Wickersham noted that the Veterans Services Foundation has partnered with the Lakeview Golf Club of Harrisonburg on a fundraiser in support of the Virginia Wounded Warrior Program. This event raised over \$24,000 to support the VWWP. This is in addition to \$5,000 raised earlier by the Lakeview Golf Club.

Mr. Wickersham called the Board's attention to the VWWP fundraising brochure included in the agenda packet, and requested the Board's support for the Program and the Foundation's fundraising efforts.

Open Public Comment

There was no open public comment.

Scheduling of Next Meeting and Adjournment

The next meeting was scheduled for January 12 at 10 am at the Virginia War Memorial. There being no further business, the meeting was adjourned at 12:30 p.m.

ATTACHMENT 1

Board of Veterans Services DVS Commissioner's Report October 8, 2008

- Virginia Wounded Warrior Program (VWWP)
 - Executive Director hired: Catherine Wilson, Captain, USN (Ret)
 - Significant near-term actions include:
 - Program Set Up: July – December 2008
 - Hiring Regional Directors: interviews scheduled for next two weeks
 - Virginia Wounded Warrior Program Summit – “Painting a Moving Train” at Woodrow Wilson Rehabilitation Center, Fishersville: November 6 and 7, 2008
 - Community funds distribution: January – March 2009
- TurboVet
 - \$100,000 appropriated by 2008 General Assembly to continue development
 - DVS working with VA and National Defense University on pilot program that could be part of national system
 - Virginia-only or regional system may still be needed as stopgap or if national efforts fail
- Sitter & Barfoot Veterans Care Center (SBVCC)
 - SBVCC is now set up to receive the U.S. Department of Veterans Affairs (VA) reimbursement
 - The first check should be received by the end of the week – \$473,000
 - The VA reimbursement (per diem) will make SBVCC more affordable to a greater number of veterans, as it will pay for 30% of the daily cost of care
- Virginia Veterans Care Center (VVCC)
 - VVCC is in the early stages of two capital improvement projects:
 - Expansion and resurfacing of the VVCC parking lot to accommodate the increased number of visitors to the facility
 - Improvements to the facility's delivery area to provide greater turnaround space for trucks. This will speed deliveries of supplies, food, and other material
- Benefits
 - In FY08, the VA Roanoke Regional office adjudicated 12,318 claims submitted by DVS on behalf of Virginia veterans. Over 63% of the claims were approved, and over \$28 million in retroactive payments were awarded
- Cemeteries

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- Albert G. Horton, Jr. Memorial Veterans Cemetery: 591 burials in FY08
- Virginia Veterans Cemetery, Amelia: 213 burials in FY08
- Virginia Veterans Cemetery, Dublin:
 - Deed transfer ceremony was held on September 22. Governor Kaine, Congressman Boucher, Senator Edwards, other state and local officials, and many members of the veterans community were in attendance. BVS members Pat Green and Peyton Robertson attended, as did many members of the JLC
 - Architect will be selected later this month
 - Expected VA construction grant is \$7.8 million
- State Approving Agency for Veterans Education and Training
 - As of June 30, 2008, there were 846 Virginia facilities approved to provide education and training to eligible veterans and their dependents. This is an increase of 71 facilities from last year
 - In FY07, over 21,000 veterans used their G.I. Bill benefits at a post-secondary education facility in Virginia
 - These benefits totaled almost \$136 million
- Virginia War Memorial
 - On July 1, DVS assumed responsibility for providing administrative support to the Virginia War Memorial. This support was previously provided by the Department of General Services
 - Upcoming events include:
 - Veterans Day Ceremony: Tuesday, November 11, 10:00 a.m.
 - Pearl Harbor Remembrance Ceremony: Sunday, December 7, 2:00 p.m.
- DVS Budget
 - All state agencies were required to submit 5, 10, and 15 percent reduction plans in September
 - DVS goal is to minimize cuts in direct services to veterans

ATTACHMENT 2

Board of Veteran Services
Benefits Subcommittee Report
8 Oct 2008

DATE: 8 Oct 2008

I. Members

Al Sample – Chairman
Kirk Cox – Delegate
Max Taylor – Member
Vacant – Needs to be filled

II. Meetings – None this period

III. Committee Activities – Though no meetings have been held, members have been independently tracking and assisting DVS in the following areas:

- Turbo Vet Portal Development – Continuing to stay abreast on its development and interfaces with other Portal Tools.
- Veteran Workforce Development Taskforce – IAW EO 19 and EO 61 the Governor established the Task Force to find improved ways of assisting veterans in finding employment and employment related training and credentialing. The Task Force is comprised of representatives from various state agencies, the VMAC Chair, the Adjutant General, DVS Commissioner, Delegate Watt, Senator Wagner and prior military Corporate owners and senior executives. The report was submitted to Governor Kaine on 25 Aug 2008.
- Attended the VMAC and JLC meeting and discussed Veteran Benefits, Services and various initiatives. Advanced the Workforce Development Taskforce and Wounded Warrior Program
- EO 19 and EO 61 – Conducted progress reviews
- The Wounded Warrior legislation passed and was signed—HB473
- The Tax Relief legislation for Reservist and ANGs passed and was signed – HB477. Met with Wounded Warrior officials to discuss implementation of the program.

ATTACHMENT 3

**Board of Veterans Services
Veterans Care Centers Committee Report
October 8, 2008**

**Virginia Veterans Care Center
Mr. Bill Van Thiel-Administrator**

The facility is experiencing some vacancies.

Proactive steps are being taken to fill all positions, including hiring from within.

Mr. Van Thiel is waiting for the formal written report from the survey conducted by the Salem VAMC. The report is expected to be very favorable according to the exit comments.

Significant projects that are in progress:

- Energy Audit and Energy Conservation Program: a comprehensive analysis to cut energy cost in compliance with E.O. 48. No residents' safety and well being are being comprised during this analysis.
- Pharmacy modification and enlargement: adding more work space for the pharmacy staff and the implementation of the OPUS (packing and dispensing system).
- Additional parking spaces: Parking spaces at the VVCC are at a premium.

There is some discussion regarding building a Veterans Care Center on the campus of George Mason University. Mr. Van Thiel met with Ms. Shirley Travis on Oct. 1, 2008 for discussions.

The annual State Licensure and Medicare/Medicaid survey will be conducted in the very near future.

The VVCC has a new and improved color brochure. The brochure is easy to read and gives the reader important information about staffing, care center features, amenities, eligibility, directions to center, and comments from residents and family members.

**Sitter & Barfoot Veterans Care Center
Ms. Sandra Ranicki-Administrator**

Staff and faculty consists of (184) classified employees and (36) wage employees.

All three nursing units are now operational. SBVCC accepted the first resident on January 7, 2008. As of (9-30-08), there were 99 residents. And as of September 30, 2008, there have been 148 admissions.

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Out of the 99 residents, **(59)** Army, **(23)** Navy, **(6)** Marine, and **(11)** Air Force. There are seven **(7)** females residents.

Payment is accepted from various sources. Twenty-one **(21)** Private Pay, forty-seven **(47)** Medicaid, and twenty-seven **(27)** Medicare Part A payments.

Two of SBVCC residents are featured in the most recent Senior Connection Magazine.

A 17-page application package can be found on the DVS website. Also on the web site are pictures of the Sitter & Barfoot Veterans Care Center, eligibility and admission information, medical review sheet, application for admission, VA Form 10-10EZ (Application for Health Benefits), and an Advance Medical Directive (Living Will).

ATTACHMENT 4

DVS Point Paper on the Missing in America Project

- **Mission Statement:** The purpose of the Missing in America Project (MIAP) is to locate, identify and inter the unclaimed cremated remains of American veterans through the joint efforts of private, state and federal organizations. To provide honor and respect to those who have served this country by securing a final resting place for these forgotten heroes. (MIAP website, <http://www.miap.us/>)
- **Scope:** The initial focus of the MIA Project will be a massive, nation-wide effort to locate, identify and inter the unclaimed remains of forgotten veterans. This task will be executed through the combined, cooperative efforts of members of the American Legion, other volunteer service and veteran organizations, local Funeral Homes, State Funeral Commissions, State and National Veterans Administration Agencies, and the State and National Veterans Cemetery Administrations. Local, state and national laws must be followed in the identification, claiming process and proper interment of the unclaimed remains of forgotten veterans.

The second phase of the MIA Project will be the creation of a network of individuals working with local Funeral Homes, State, and National Agencies to ensure that, from now on, the cremated remains of any unclaimed veteran will be identified, claimed and interred in a timely manner. This will be an ongoing project and will most likely be a cooperative effort between many voluntary service organizations. (MIAP website, <http://www.miap.us/>)

- MIAP is governed by a national committee, with coordinators at the state level
 - The MIAP State Coordinator for Virginia is Mr. Charles Wathling
- MIAP does not have an estimate of the number of unclaimed cremated remains (cremains) of veterans in Virginia
- The Joint Leadership Council of Veterans Service Organizations (JLC) has also asked DVS to study this issue
- Two sections of the Code of Virginia are most directly applicable to the work of the MIAP:
 - §32.1-288. Disposition of dead body; how expenses paid
 - §54.1-2808.1. Disposition of cremains
- §32.1-288. Disposition of dead body; how expenses paid (attached)
 - The sheriff or other person or institution having initial custody of the dead body shall make a good faith effort to identify the next of kin
 - If no person claims the body, it may be donated for medical research
 - If the body is not used for medical research, the sheriff of the city or county where

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- death occurred must accept the dead body for proper disposition
 - Proper disposition can include sending a dead body to a funeral home for cremation
- §54.1-2808.1. Disposition of cremains (attached). Excerpts below, with bullets added:
 - A funeral director may dispose of the cremains of an individual by interment, entombment, inurnment, or by scattering of the cremains, if after ninety days from the date of cremation, the contracting agent has not claimed the cremains, or instructed the funeral director as to final disposition.
 - The funeral director shall keep a permanent record of all cremains which identifies the method and site of final disposition.
 - The costs and all reasonable expenses incurred in disposing of the cremains shall be borne by the contracting agent.
 - Upon the disposition of the cremains, the funeral director shall not be liable for the cremains or for the method of final disposition
- As briefed by Senior Attorney General Don Ferguson at the last Board meeting, funeral directors have the authority to “dispose of the cremains.” Presumably, this would include transfer to a national or state veterans cemetery for inurnment (either in-ground or columbarium)
- The Code of Virginia does not require city or county officials, or funeral directors, to determine veteran status
- Working in partnership with city and county officials, and/or with funeral directors, DVS can verify if unclaimed cremains are those of a veteran, and if so, if the veteran qualifies for burial in a national or state veterans cemetery
- Virginia’s state veterans cemeteries can provide a dignified memorial service and final resting place for the unclaimed cremains of veterans

ATTACHMENT 5

DVS Point Paper on Burial Vaults at Virginia's state veterans cemeteries

- A burial vault is an in-ground concrete shell into which a casket is placed
 - Pre-installed burial vaults are sometimes known as lawn crypts
 - Vault liners are similar to burial vaults, but are made of thinner concrete
- Burial vaults, lawn crypts, and vault liners all serve the same purpose: to protect the casket and to provide stability to the cemetery grounds
- At national cemeteries, the U.S. Department of Veterans Affairs (VA) provides lawn crypts or reinforced vault liners at no cost to the veteran or his/her family
- At Virginia's state veterans cemeteries, the veteran or his/her family is required to provide a burial vault or reinforced vault liner. The burial vaults or vault liners are purchased from a funeral home at a cost of \$800 to \$1,200
- DVS can purchase double-depth burial vaults (i.e. vaults that will hold two caskets) in bulk for approximately \$450 per vault
- A special piece of equipment, called a vault cart, is required to place a vault in the ground
 - The Albert G. Horton, Jr. Memorial Cemetery has a vault cart
 - The Virginia Veterans Cemetery, Amelia does not have a vault cart
 - The Virginia Veterans Cemetery, Dublin will have a vault cart when it opens in 2010
- DVS places vaults "one at a time." In other words, the vaults are not placed in the ground until the memorial service is scheduled
- Lawn crypts are "pre-installed." Pre-installation involves:
 - Removing the earth from a large piece of land – sometimes one acre or more
 - Constructing a "bed" on which the crypts will be placed. The bed facilitates drainage and provides a stable foundation for the crypts
 - Placing a large number of crypts on the prepared bed and then filling in around them
 - Covering the crypts with approximately 18 – 24" of soil
- Advantages of pre-installed crypts are:
 - Lower cost of operations: cemetery workers only have to dig down 18 – 24" to reach the lid of the crypt, instead of digging a 7 foot hole
 - Safety: not having to dig as many 7-foot holes reduces the risk of injury
 - Lower cost of operations: because the crypts rest on a prepared bed, they do not settle as much as vaults placed one at a time
 - Longer operational life of cemetery – pre-installation allows more crypts per acre

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- Construction plans for the Virginia Veterans Cemetery, Dublin call for the pre-installation of 1,250 lawn crypts
 - The cost of the crypts is included in the VA construction grant
 - The crypts will be offered at no cost to the veteran or his/her family
- The topography of the Dublin cemetery is such that only 1,250 pre-installed crypts can be installed in Phase 1
 - Plans for Phases 2 – 4 provide for installation of some pre-installed crypts when those phases are built
- After the pre-installed crypts at the Dublin cemetery run out, the veteran or his/her family will be required to purchase vaults, as is now the case at the Amelia and Suffolk cemeteries
- DVS will apply for federal grant funding to pre-install lawn crypts at the Amelia and Suffolk cemeteries. Funding is dependent on available VA resources and is by no means guaranteed
- Budget resources required for DVS to purchase double-depth vaults in bulk and offer them to the veteran or his/her family at not cost:
 - \$270,000 per fiscal year (600 burials/year x \$450 per double-depth vault)
 - \$16,000 in one-time funding to purchase a vault cart for the Amelia cemetery

ATTACHMENT 6

Joint Leadership Council of Veterans Service Organizations 2009 LEGISLATIVE OBJECTIVES

The following legislative objectives for 2009 were adopted by the Joint Leadership Council of Veterans Service Organizations (the JLC) on August 13, 2008. These are the top legislative objectives of the 23 Veterans Service Organizations represented on the JLC.

- **TurboVet System:** The JLC recommends that the Governor and General Assembly fully fund the development and deployment of the TurboVet System.
- **Homeless Veterans Study:** The JLC recommends that the Governor and General Assembly fund a study to examine the current level of services provided to homeless veterans in the Commonwealth of Virginia, and the need for and cost of additional services.
- **Burial Vaults for Virginia State Veterans Cemeteries:** The JLC recommends that the Governor and General Assembly appropriate funds so that burial vaults may be provided at no cost at Virginia state veterans cemeteries.
- **Real Estate Tax Relief for 100% Disabled Veterans:** The JLC recommends that Governor and General Assembly pass legislation to amend the Virginia Constitution that would require local governments to grant real estate tax exemptions for 100% disabled veterans without regard to means testing.
- **Interstate Compact on Educational Opportunities for Military Children:** The JLC recommends that the Governor and General Assembly enact HB395 (2008), *Interstate Compact on Educational Opportunity for Military Children*.
- **Military Family Relief Fund:** The JLC recommends that the Governor and General Assembly enact legislation such that benefits paid from the Military Family Relief Fund shall be nontaxable.

JLC Position Paper
TurboVet

1. **OBJECTIVE:** Employ the TurboVet System to expedite receipt of veterans disability benefits and increase revenue flow to the Commonwealth
2. **BACKGROUND:**
 - Veterans who were wounded or injured while on active duty may file a claim for disability compensation benefits with the U.S. Department of Veterans Affairs (the VA)
 - The VA adjudicates the claim based on evidence submitted or subsequently gathered
 - On average it takes 12 months for a claim to be adjudicated
 - If a claim is approved, a veteran will receive between \$117 and \$3,000 per month, depending on degree of disability and number of eligible dependents
 - If a claim is denied, a veteran may appeal – a process that generally take 2-3 years
 - Currently, only 5% of submitted claims are “ready to rate” – i.e. accurate, complete, and with all required documentation. Returned claims greatly delay the claims review and adjudication process and increase manpower costs.
 - There are over 800,000 veterans in Virginia; 112,000 receive compensation benefits.
 - The number of disability claims filed by DVS on behalf of Virginia veterans is increasing by over 1,000 each year and places an additional burden on an already overloaded VA system
 - Complex laws, with entitlements linked to rigorous documentation and proof of eligibility, make the system time-consuming, confusing, complicated, and uncoordinated.
 - Redundant information must be entered on multiple forms that must be visually checked.
 - The Virginia Department of Veterans Services (DVS) human resources and IT solutions have reached capacity. It cannot keep up with the ever-increasing demands to assist veterans applying for disability compensation benefits.
 - Additionally, the DVS is losing qualified claims agents. Because the claims-filing process is as complicated as the tax code, it takes 3 – 5 years to train new qualified agents.
 - It takes one additional claims agent for every 500 new claims filed.
3. **DISCUSSION:**
 - *TurboVet* is a web based computer system that has been validated through a “proof of concept.”
 - *TurboVet* uses the same logic as the “Turbo Tax” program. The system is designed improve the accuracy of applications and ensure that supporting information is presented in a clear and consistent manner, making claims “ready to rate.”

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- *TurboVet* will provide the DVS with a robust, secure, and cost-effective system to serve more veterans within current human resource levels. It will allow DVS to file an additional 6,000 claims per year that are accurate, complete, and “ready to rate.”
 - *TurboVet* will improve the accuracy and timeliness of disability claims processing; the “ready to rate” average is expected to climb from 5% to approximately 95%.
 - *TurboVet* will have a definite, positive impact on the Virginia Wounded Warrior Program by allowing veterans to receive VA benefits for PTSD and TBI much faster, and could result in direct-service expenses.
 - The cost to fully deploy the system will be \$1.2 million in the first year and \$250,000 annual operating costs.
 - The increased economic benefit to the Commonwealth is estimated to be up to \$195 million/year.
4. **RECOMMENDATION:** That the Governor and General Assembly appropriate \$1.2 million to fully fund and deploy the *TurboVet* system and provide \$250,000 in annual operating costs.

JLC Position Paper
Homeless Veterans Study

1. **OBJECTIVE:** To begin the process of reducing homelessness among veterans in the Commonwealth by: 1) identifying gaps in current services; 2) developing an improved service-delivery model that better integrates federal, state, local, and private resources; and 3) identifying the resources needed to implement the improved service-delivery model.
2. **BACKGROUND:**
 - An estimated 900 veterans are homeless in Virginia at any one time
 - 500 in Hampton Roads
 - 200 in Central Virginia
 - 50 in the Roanoke Valley and Southwest Virginia
 - 150 in other parts of the state
 - In addition to the factors affecting the general homeless population, veterans experience homelessness due to the lingering effects of Post Traumatic Stress Disorder (PTSD), Traumatic Brain Injury (TBI), and a lack of family and social support networks
 - “(Nationwide) veterans make up a disproportionate share of homeless people. They represent roughly 26 percent of homeless people, but only 11 percent of the civilian population 18 years and older. This is true despite the fact that veterans are better educated, more likely to be employed, and have a lower poverty rate than the general population.” *National Alliance to End Homelessness*
 - A variety of specialized programs are available for homeless veterans through the U.S. Department of Veterans Affairs (the VA) and other federal agencies, including:
 - Grant funding for transitional and permanent supportive housing
 - Employment assistance and compensated work therapy
 - Medical care
 - Substance abuse counseling
 - Disability compensation
3. **DISCUSSION:**
 - While a wide variety of specialized services are available to homeless veterans (in addition to the services available to the general homeless population) there is a perceived:
 - Lack of coordination between service providers (for example, between community providers and the VA). This has left critical gaps in services that could be provided for homeless veterans, if there was a community partner who was 1) willing to provide those services, and 2) had the resources to do so
 - Lack of knowledge among community service providers about services available from the federal government and how to connect homeless veterans to those services
 - Lack of knowledge among community service providers about the funding opportunities available from the federal government and how to access those funding sources
 - Because of the lack of a coordinated service delivery program for homeless veterans, community organizations in Virginia have generally been unsuccessful when competing for federal grant resources

4. **RECOMMENDATION:** That the Governor and General Assembly fund a study to:
1) examine the current level of services provided to homeless veterans in the Commonwealth of Virginia; 2) identify gaps in service; and 3) identify the need for and cost of additional services as part of a coordinated service delivery model.

JLC Position Paper
Burial Vaults for Virginia State Veterans Cemeteries

1. **OBJECTIVE:** To provide burial vaults at no cost to support the interment of veterans at state veterans cemeteries.
2. **BACKGROUND:**
 - A burial vault is an in-ground protective concrete shell into which a casket is placed
 - Burial vaults stabilize the cemetery grounds by preventing subsidence around the burial site
 - At national cemeteries, the U.S. Department of Veterans Affairs (VA) provides burial vaults at no cost
 - At Virginia's state veterans cemeteries, veterans are required to purchase burial vaults from a funeral home at a cost of \$800 to \$1,200
 - DVS can purchase burial vaults in bulk for approximately \$450 per vault
 - A special piece of equipment, called a vault cart, is required to place a burial vault in the ground. Vaults carts cost approximately \$16,000.
 - The Virginia Veterans Cemetery, Amelia does not have a vault cart
 - The Albert G. Horton, Jr. Memorial Cemetery in Suffolk has a vault cart
 - The planned Virginia Veterans Cemetery, Dublin will have a vault cart
3. **DISCUSSION:**
 - Virginia state veterans cemeteries should provide the same level of service as national cemeteries
 - This should include providing burial vaults at no cost to Virginia veterans and eligible family members
 - To provide this service to Virginia veterans and eligible family members, DVS would need:
 - \$270,000 per fiscal year (600 burials/year x \$450 per burial vault)
 - \$16,000 in one-time funding to purchase vault cart for the Virginia Veterans Cemetery, Amelia
4. **RECOMMENDATION:** That the Governor and General Assembly provide \$286,000 in the first year and \$270,000 annually thereafter to provide burial vaults at no cost to Virginia veterans and eligible family members

JLC Position Paper
Real Estate Tax Exemption for 100% Disabled Veterans

1. **OBJECTIVE:** To provide real estate tax exemption for 100% disabled veterans without means testing.
2. **BACKGROUND:**
 - The Virginia Code provides that the “governing body of any county, city or town may by ordinance provide for the exemption from ...taxation of real estate for persons “at least sixty five years of age or if provided in the ordinance anyone found to be permanently and totally disabled.”
 - The Code further sets restrictions and conditions on any exemption provided by the localities which include 1) income restrictions and 2) financial worth restrictions. Income restrictions apply to the owner and any relatives living in the dwelling. Financial worth restrictions apply to the owner and his/her spouse.
 - Localities may set income/net worth caps lower than those mandated by the state but may not set caps higher than those set by the state.
 - The U.S. Department of Veterans Affairs (the VA) reported that 6,649 Virginia veterans were rated 100% disabled as of September 2007.
3. **DISCUSSION:**
 - The Department of Veterans Services (DVS) held numerous town hall meetings in 2007 and 2008 at locations across the state. Each revealed the need for real estate tax exemption for 100% disabled veterans.
 - 100% disabled veterans continue to suffer from disabilities incurred during active military service to our Nation and our Commonwealth.
 - In Executive Order 19, “Serving Virginia’s Veterans,” Governor Kaine directed DVS to pay particular attention to the needs of disabled veterans. In its report to the Governor, DVS recommended real estate tax relief for 100% disabled veterans.
4. **RECOMMENDATION:** That the Governor and General Assembly begin the process of amending Virginia’s Constitution to require local governments to grant real estate exemptions for 100% disabled veterans without means testing.

JLC Position Paper
Interstate Compact on Educational Opportunities for Military Children

1. **OBJECTIVE:** To enact HB395, supporting the Interstate Compact on Educational Opportunities for Military Children

2. **BACKGROUND:**
 - Military families encounter significant challenges in the education of their children due to frequent relocations in performance of service to our Nation.
 - Military children experience numerous relocations during their K-12 education. On average, this involves attending 6 to 9 different schools between grades K-12.
 - Military families face numerous challenges related to their child's education, including issues related to enrollment, eligibility, placement, and graduation requirements.
 - Lack of documents related to educational records, immunizations, etc. can prevent timely enrollment until the documents are received by the gaining school system. This has a negative impact on a military child's continued education/graduation.

3. **DISCUSSION:**
 - The Council of State Governments (CSG), in cooperation with the Department of Defense, proposed the implementation of an Interstate Compact on Educational Opportunities for Military Children (the Compact).
 - The Compact creates a uniform policy at the state/local level for transfers of military children between participating school systems. For example, the Compact allows for the expeditious transfer of required records by permitting unofficial records to be hand carried between school systems. This allows enrollment until the losing school system forwards the official records by mail or electronic means.
 - The Compact creates a State Council to provide coordination and address compliance.
 - Ten states have adopted the Compact, but Virginia has not yet adopted the Compact.
 - The CSG estimates the cost of participating in the Compact at \$1 per military student.
 - The CSG put the number of Virginia military students at 78,609 as of June 2006.
 - HB395 (2008, Cole) would commit Virginia to the Compact.
 - HB395 passed the House (99-0).
 - HB395 was continued to 2009 in the Senate Finance Committee.
 - Both the Virginia Military Advisory Council and the Virginia Citizen-Soldier Support Council have voted to adopt the Compact in their 2009 Objectives.

4. **RECOMMENDATION:** That the Governor and the General Assembly enact HB395, enabling Virginia to participate in the Interstate Compact on Educational Opportunities for Military Children.

JLC Position Paper
Military Family Relief Fund

1. **OBJECTIVE:** To exempt from Virginia Income Taxes distributions made from the Virginia Military Family Relief Fund (VMFRF).
2. **BACKGROUND:**
 - The VMFRF (Virginia Code 44-102.2) was established in 2006 to assist military families that are having difficulty meeting basic needs due to military deployments.
 - Under the VMFRF, Guardsmen and Reservists who have been called to extended active duty (periods in excess of 90 days) or their family members may apply for financial relief to meet basic needs, such as food, housing, utilities, and medical care.
 - Since inception, the VMFRF has provided relief to 95 families and disbursed \$98,100. The average disbursement was \$1,032.
 - Disbursements from the VMFRF are classified as taxable income under the Code.
3. **DISCUSSION:**
 - Taxing VMFRF disbursements means that only a portion of the funds may be used for the intended purpose. This is contrary to the purpose of the VMFRF, which is to provide relief to military families, not to return revenue to the state.
 - Based on an average of 50 households using VMFRF benefits per year, and each household paying a marginal tax rate of 5.75 percent, lost revenue to the Commonwealth would be less than \$3,000 per year.
4. **RECOMMENDATION:** That the Governor and General Assembly enact legislation to exempt from Virginia Income Taxes distributions made from the Virginia Military Family Relief Fund.

ATTACHMENT 7

VETERANS SERVICES FOUNDATION REPORT TO BOARD OF VETERANS SERVICES October 8, 2008

The Veterans Services Foundation Board of Trustees met on August 6, 2008. The meeting:

- (1) Conducted a Board of Trustees Orientation in which the Chairs of the BVS and JLC participated.
- (2) Approved the Foundation In-Kind Donations Policy.
- (3) Reviewed Foundation fund raising conducted during July 08.
- (4) Reviewed FY 09 fund raising requirements which were adopted by the Development Committee
- (5) Reviewed FY09 Goals and Objectives based on the Strategic Planning Initiative
- (6) Appointed new members to Standing Committees.
- (7) Held Standing Committee meetings.

Eight new citizen members of the Foundation Board of Trustees (listed in the last Foundation report to BVS) were sworn in by the Secretary of the Commonwealth, Katherine Hanley. Secretary Hanley gave the board a stirring account of a severely wounded soldier, which was greatly appreciated by all in attendance.

Foundation fund raising for the Virginia Wounded Warrior Program (VWWP) conducted with the support of the Military Family Support Centers (MFSC) concluded with the final report pending action by the MFSC. The Foundation, in conjunction with the Lakeview Golf Club in Harrisonburg, held two successful fund raising golf events: a July event netted over \$5,000 and the September tournament has an expected income of about \$20,000. Veterans Services Organizations are starting to support the Wounded Warrior fund raising goal of \$150,000 for FY09. Attached is a VWWP FAQ sheet with a pledge form for individuals and organizations to use to help support fundraising for this program.

The Board Development Committee has been working on developing a public outreach and branding plan and compiling potential donor lists.

The next meeting is scheduled for November 12, 2008. The meeting will be held at the Sitter & Barfoot Veterans Care Center in Richmond. Items for the next meeting include: (1) adoption of FY09 goals and objectives, (2) clarification of the role of the Financial Committee stated in the ByLaws, (3) report on fund raising results, (4) discussion of public outreach and donor identification plans; (5) discussion of fundraising programs for FY 09 and FY10; and (6) review of VSF Strategic Planning.

Respectfully submitted,

Frank Wickersham
VSF Chairman